

A Self-Paced Study Guide for
the Presbytery of East Iowa

"Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world.

And ready to fight for it."

- Arundati Roy

WEEK TWO - Theme for the Week

Untouchable: The Divine and the Corrupt

Readings from *Caste*

PART ONE: TOXINS IN THE PERMAFROST AND HEAT RISING ALL AROUND

Ch. 3 – "An American Untouchable"

Scripture

Jewish law forbade touching lepers (Lev 5:3) and quarantined lepers from regular society (Lev 13:45-46); people avoided most contact with them (2 Kings 7:3). Some believed that the defilement of leprosy was one of the greatest defilements, for a leper could communicate diseased corruption even by entering a house. It is thus no small matter for Jesus to compassionately touch the man. Yet by touching Jesus does not actually undermine the law of Moses but fulfills its purpose by providing cleansing (Mt 5:17-48; compare Lev 13:3, 8, 10, 13, 17).

As often happens today, some people in antiquity constructed theological or cultural rationalizations for seeing others as "untouchables," perhaps to escape from the fear that they too may be vulnerable and thus need to maintain social power and control.

Genesis 1:27

So God created humans in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Questions for Reflection

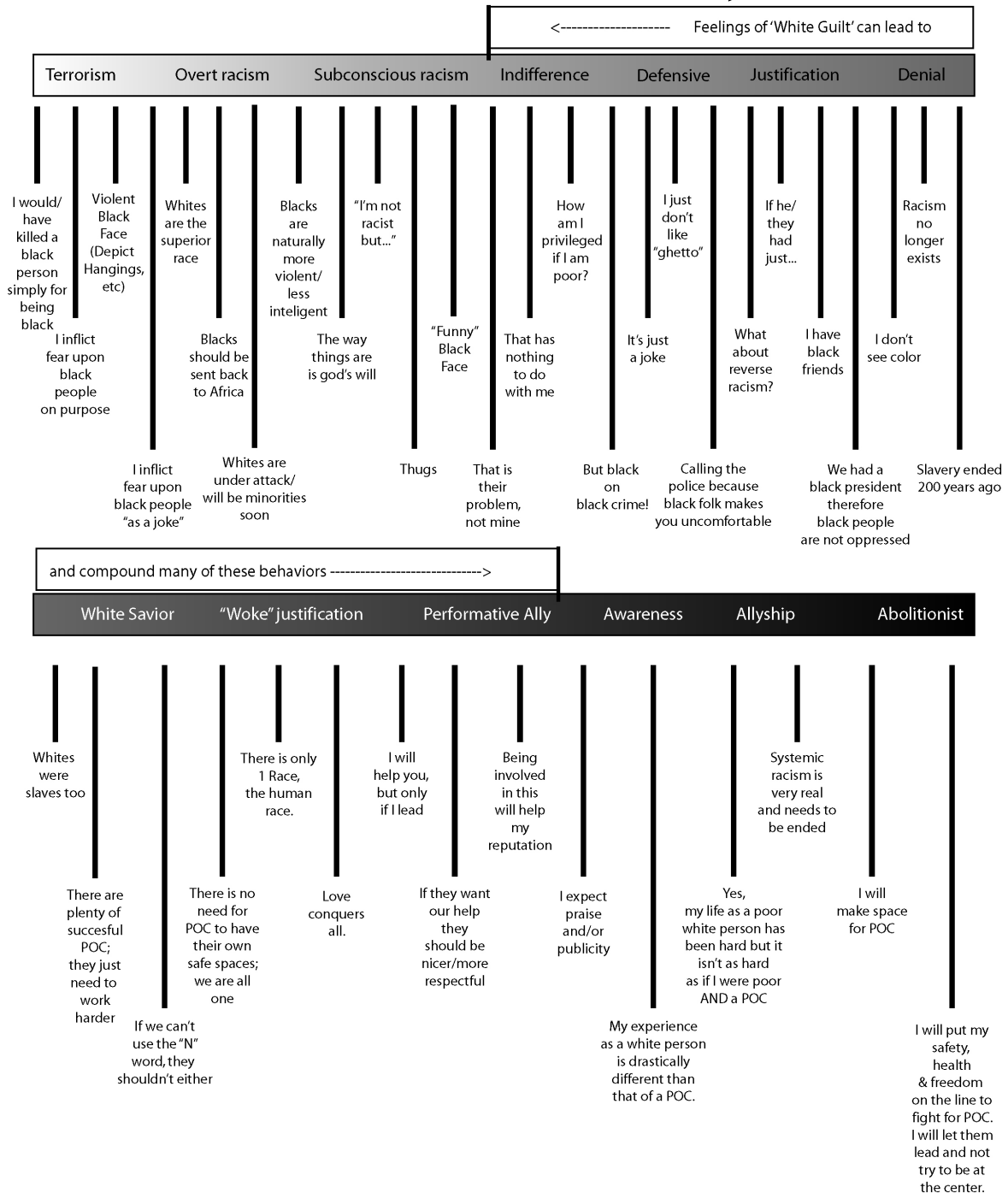
1. Wilkerson uses many different metaphors to help us visualize the negative impact of the American caste system: the bones inside a body, the beams inside a house, even the computer program in the 1999 film, *The Matrix*. How do these metaphors help you to understand how caste works in American culture?

2. What does it mean to be a leper in society? Whom does a caste system benefit? Whom does it harm? How?
3. What is your understanding of class and caste? How is class different from caste? How are these two concepts related?

Action Steps

Take a look at the Racism Scale below. Take a long, hard, honest look. Where are you located? Where are you starting from? What were you taught? Where have you journeyed?

Racism Scale: Where do you fall?



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***Note: It is common for many people to move back & forth along the scale regularly, especially the middle parts**
**** The term "blacks" is used to be more familiar to anyone of those mentalities**
*****"Blacks" can be substituted with people of any nationality/ethnicity other than European white since it's people of European descent who have held institutional power in America since its inception.**